

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice CRP-393

For: State and County Offices

Preparations for CRP Signup 25

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs, FSA

Concurred by: Deputy Chief for Programs, NRCS



1 Overview

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Background

The next CRP general signup, 25, is being developed to continue acceptance of offers of environmentally sensitive acreage for new 10- to 15-year contracts to cost-effectively enroll acreage for program year 2003.

As during previous general signups, the continuous signup provisions will be offered concurrently with the general signup 25 period. For program administration purposes, the continuous signup number changed from signup 23 to signup 24 for CRP-1's offered on October 1, 2001.

No decision has been made regarding the number of acres to be enrolled during signup 25. The number of acres accepted will be determined after signup 25 concludes based on the environmental benefits and the cost of the acres offered. It is anticipated that the CRP offer process for signup 25 will continue to be highly competitive. The national EBI cutoff score will be determined after the signup concludes. The signup 25 EBI cutoff score may be equal to, higher than, or lower than the cutoff score for previous signups.

The President's FY 2002 Budget provided for a FY 2002 pilot program for acquisition of private sector technical assistance. This pilot will allow USDA to determine if contracting out some services improves program delivery and reduces costs, and whether contracting should be explored for similar programs.

The signup dates for general signup 25 will be announced later.

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Disposal Date

October 1, 2002

Distribution

State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices
and NRCS State Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

B

Setting Priorities State and County Offices shall set workload priorities and plan office activities accordingly to ensure timely program implementation.

C

Purpose This notice provides information about:

- reviewing established C/S rates
 - continuous signup provisions beginning October 1, 2001
 - State ranking plans
 - Soil Rental Rates
 - determining total county cropland for signup 25
 - continuation of EBI subfactors N1a and N1b
 - CPA's
 - other general information.
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D

Exhibit 1 Exhibit 1 provides key completion dates in preparing for signup 25.

2 C/S Rates

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General Guidance 2-CRP, Part 19, provides guidance to State and County Offices for establishing CRP C/S rates. Practice requirements and either flat rates or percent of actual cost levels, not to exceed a dollar limitation per unit measure, shall be established according to 2-CRP, Part 19. Since signup 20, there may have been significant changes in seed and material prices. The most current market prices must be used when establishing C/S rates for signup 25.

2 C/S Rates (Continued)

B

Rate Review

The cost of eligible items for C/S may also have changed since the rates were established before CRP signup 20. If not already completed, State and County Offices must:

- review current C/S rates to ascertain their accuracy
- base flat rates or limitations on documented average costs
- use percent of cost levels only if there is no data or there is considerable variation in actual costs across a State or county.

Note: Use existing FSA and NRCS average cost lists as supporting flat C/S rates. Rates similar to EQIP C/S (but not EQIP incentive) rates may be used.

In States where the County Office established C/S rates, the State FSA Office:

- or designee, shall review all C/S rates to ensure that the C/S rates are consistent across county boundaries
- shall review all C/S rates to ensure that the C/S rates are consistent across district and State boundaries.

Important: State Offices are not authorized to delegate the authority to review C/S rates across district and State boundaries, including delegation to DD's.

Reviews shall be completed and rates updated, where appropriate, before January 11, 2002.

C

Rate Consistency

When establishing CRP C/S rates, average costs for the same practice components should be the same regardless of the C/S program. Rates for similar practices should be similar. State and local FSA, NRCS Offices, conservation districts, and the State Forestry Agency are encouraged to coordinate C/S rate determinations to ensure consistency.

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3 Continuous Signup Provisions

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Continuous Signup 24 Period

2-CRP, subparagraph 98 B, provides that CRP continuous signup numbers shall change at the beginning of each FY. For FY 2002, October 1, 2001, through September 30, 2002, the continuous signup number shall be 24.

Note: The program year is the FY in which the first payment is earned.

Example: Producer submitted an offer for CP21 on July 30, 2001. COC approved CRP-1 on August 25, 2001. Producer defers the effective date of CRP-1 to November 1, 2001. The program year for the contract is 2002.

B

Concurrent Signups

General signup 25 will be held concurrently with continuous signup 24. County Offices shall process offers of acreage under the continuous signup provisions during the general signup 25 period.

Continuous signup 24 will begin before general signup 25 begins. State and County Offices shall ensure that CRP-2's and CRP-1's provide the correct signup number.

4 State Ranking Plans

A

Not Authorized for Signup 25

2-CRP, paragraph 128, provides that STC's, in consultation with State Technical Committees, may implement a State ranking plan rather than use the national ranking plan. **For signup 25, State ranking plans are not authorized.** All States shall use the national ranking plan. All eligible offers will be processed at the National Office using the national ranking plan.

Note: State Offices are **not** required to submit a memorandum indicating that the national ranking plan will be used.

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5 Soil Rental Rates

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Soil Rental Rate Review

The soil rental rates currently in effect shall be used for general signup 25. A nationwide soil rental rate review will not be conducted before signup 25.

County Offices shall ensure that the current Soil Rental Rate Posting Report, according to 1-CRP, paragraph. 225, is displayed in a public area before the beginning of general signup 25.

6 County Cropland Limitation

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Background

2-CRP, Part 12, provides policy for the 25 percent cropland limitation. For signup 25, the total county cropland used to determine the 25 percent cropland limitation will be determined by the cropland total maintained in the System/36 Farm Summary File.

County Offices must update the total county cropland acreage in the CRP software using the System/36 Farm Summary File according to this notice. The CRP software will compare the acreage enrolled in CRP and WRP, excluding CRP acreage that is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2002, to the total cropland acreage administratively located in the county.

B

Provisions for Signup 25

Waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation previously approved for any other signup are **not** effective for signup 25.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

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Determining Total County Cropland for Signup 25

County Offices shall use the following table to determine and transmit to the State Office the total county cropland and other data to be used for signup 25.

Step	Action
1	Immediately upon receipt of this notice, County Offices shall request the number of cropland acres enrolled in WRP from NRCS. Note: Do not obtain Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) data.
2	After all WRP data is obtained, but no later than November 30, 2001, County Offices shall access Conservation Main Menu EEA000 according to 1-CRP, paragraph 266.
3	On Menu EEA000, ENTER "3", "CRP Contract File Menu", and PRESS "Enter". CRP Contract File Menu EPCA00 will be displayed.
4	On Menu EPCA00, ENTER "10", "Available No./Cropland/Easement", and PRESS "Enter". Available No./Cropland/Easement Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.
5	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "1", "Available Contract and Cropland Data", and PRESS "Enter". Contract No./Cropland Screen EPCC1001 will be displayed.
6	<p>On Screen EPCC1001:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enter the WRP cropland data received from NRCS (step 1) in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field <p>Note: Land other than cropland may be enrolled in WRP. County Offices shall only enter the cropland enrolled in WRP in the "Total WRP Accepted Acres" field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> place cursor in the "Enter percentage if waiver is authorized" field and remove the amount displayed by pressing the "Field Exit" key <p>Notes: County Offices approved for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation for previous CRP signups shall not enter the previous waiver amount in this field.</p> <p>If the FSA National Office approves a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation for signup 25, County Offices must enter the percent waived in the "Enter percentage if waiver is authorized" field. Only FSA National Office approved waivers may be entered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enter the total county cropland which shall be the same as the farm summary cropland. <p>Note: The farm summary cropland total is displayed on the same screen.</p> <p>Important: After the new total county cropland from the Farm Summary File has been entered, County Offices shall not change the cropland total on Screen EPCC1001, unless authorized by FSA National Office.</p>

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

C
Determining
Total County
Cropland for
Signup 25
(Continued)

Step	Action
7	After entering the current WRP cropland data and county cropland total, PRESS "Enter" twice. Data entered will be updated and Available No./Cropland/Easement Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed. Important: If "Enter" is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will not be updated in the CRP software.
8	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "2", "Easement Data", and PRESS "Enter". Easement Data Screen EPCC1002 will be displayed.
9	On Screen EPCC1002, verify that the "WRP Accepted Acres" and "Total County Cropland" fields are updated with the data entered on Screen EPCC1001. After verifying that the data is correct, PRESS "Enter". Data entered will be updated and Available No./Cropland/Easement Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed. Important: If "Enter" is not pressed after the new data is entered, the new data will not be updated in the CRP software.
10	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER, "7", "Available Cropland Minus September 30 Expirations" and PRESS "Enter". CRP-Select Expiration Year Screen EPCC0505 will be displayed. ENTER "2002" and PRESS "Enter". Warning message will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Cropland Minus Expiring Screen EPCC1007 will be displayed.
11	On Screen EPCC1007, verify the "WRP Accepted Acres" and "Total County Cropland" fields are updated with the data entered on Screen EPCC1001. After verifying that the data is correct, PRESS "Enter". Available No./Cropland/Easement Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.
12	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "5", "Summary of County Cropland, CRP, Easement & WRP Data Report", and PRESS "Enter". CRP-Select Expiration Year Screen EPCC0505 will be displayed. Enter "2002" and PRESS "Enter". Warning message will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Screen FAX46501 will be displayed to change printer ID. The message, "PRESS "Enter" to print Report EPCC10-R003", will be displayed . Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

C
Determining
Total County
Cropland for
Signup 25
(Continued)

Step	Action
13	Review Report EPCC10-R003 to ensure that the data entered on Screen EPCC1001 is listed on the report. Screen EPCC0501 will be redisplayed. County Offices shall file the printed report under file code CRP-2 according to 25-AS, Exhibit 32.
14	On Screen EPCC0501, ENTER "6", "Prepare Cropland/Easement File for Transmission" and PRESS "Enter". CRP-Select Expiration Year Screen EPCC0505 will be displayed. Enter "2002" and PRESS "Enter". Warning message will be displayed. PRESS "Enter". Screen FAX46501 will be displayed to change printer ID. PRESS "Enter" to print Report EPCC10-R004. Screen EPCC0501 will be displayed.
15	Review Report EPCC10-R004 to ensure that the data entered on Screen EPCC1001 is listed on the report. Screen EPCC0501 will be redisplayed. County Offices shall file the printed report under file code CRP-2 according to 25-AS, Exhibit 32.
16	By COB December 5, 2001, County Offices shall transmit Report EPCC10-R004 to the State Office according to 1-CRP, paragraphs 536 and 537. Note: State Offices are not required to send reports to the National Office. Records will be automatically transmitted in the monthly upload.

The total county cropland amount entered on Screen EPCC1001 will be used to determine acceptability of offers submitted for signup 25. County Offices shall **not** change, without FSA National Office authorization, the total county cropland total entered on Screen EPCC1001 after Report EPCC10-R004 is transmitted. **Any changes to the amount entered may result in incorrect ranking of offers and termination of CRP-1's.**

Note: County Offices shall also use total county cropland reports to monitor county enrollment for applicable FWP States.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (continued)

D

**Requesting
Waivers Before
Signup 25**

County Offices that meet the requirements for requesting waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation provided in 2-CRP, Part 12, must request a waiver from the FSA National Office through STC, if COC determines it wants acreage physically located within the county to be eligible to be offered in signup 25.

Requests must be submitted to the FSA National Office no later than COB December 14, 2001.

Note: Land physically located in a county that has reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation is **not** eligible to be enrolled in general signup 25 unless a waiver of the cropland limitation is approved **by the FSA National Office before** signup 25 begins.

COC's may submit requests for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation to STC's according to 2-CRP, paragraph 255.

STC's shall review all requests for waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation and process requests according to the following table.

IF...	THEN...
all requirements of 2-CRP, paragraph 255 are met and STC recommends approval	send request to the FSA National Office CRP Program Manager, by COB December 14, 2001 , with recommendation and all supporting documentation. Note: Failure to submit complete requests with STC or designee recommendation will delay FSA National Office response.
all requirements of 2-CRP, paragraph 255 are not met, or STC does not recommend approval	STC must deny the waiver request.

Important: STC's have no authority to approve a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation.

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6 County Cropland Limitation (Continued)

E

**Counties
Exceeding
Maximum
Acreage**

For signup 25, the cropland limitation shall continue to be determined by the total cropland administratively located in the county. However, County Offices shall process offers from eligible producers **only** if the acreage being offered is **physically** located in a county that has **not** reached or exceeded the 25 percent county cropland limitation.

Notes: Unless a waiver is approved by the FSA National Office before signup begins, COC's shall immediately notify producers who submit an offer for land physically located in a county that has reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation that the offer is rejected using CRP-26. See 2-CRP, Exhibit 12.

County Offices shall **not** transmit offers to the State Office that are rejected by COC.

The administering County Office shall verify **both** of the following before processing an offer:

- physical location of the land being offered
- that the county where the land being offered is physically located has not reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation or the county was approved **the FSA National Office** for a waiver **before** the signup period began.

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7 FSA and NRCS Update of EBI Factors and Tables

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Signup 25 EBI

The EBI approved at the national level for general signup 20 will be used for general signup 25. No significant changes were made to the EBI since signup 20, therefore intensive reviews of subfactor N1a and N1b cover matrix will not be necessary for general signup 25.

B

Subfactor N1a Cover

For general signup 25, no reviews for N1a cover are required. All N1a covers approved for signup 20 are approved for signup 25.

C

Updating Matrix and Lookup Tables for Subfactors N1b, N2b, N2c, and N5a

NRCS Field Offices shall not destroy or discard the previous T&E matrix or tables and maintain the previous matrix and tables until further notice.

Important: NRCS State Offices shall ensure that the correct lookup table is used for signup 25. Use of the incorrect table may result in errors and terminated contracts.

Important: Do not destroy or discard the T&E matrix used for signup 20. Maintain a copy in the NRCS Field Office until further notice.

D

Reviewing Subfactor N5b WESL

To prepare for signup 25, NRCS shall provide a copy of the "Signup 25 WESL" list to the applicable NRCS Field Offices by December 30, 2001.

Important: Maintain a copy of the WESL used for signup 20 in the NRCS Field Office until further notice.

E

NRCS EI/EBI Software

NRCS will provide a revised PC-based EBI spreadsheet. No other programs or EBI software are authorized.

Note: FSA State and County Offices shall notify the National Office of unauthorized modifications to approved software. Use of unauthorized software has contributed to errors in EBI calculations.

8 Conservation Priority Areas (CPA's)

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State CPA's

There will be no new or modified State CPA's accepted for signup 25; however, all previously approved State CPA's will be in effect for signup 25. State CPA's were listed in Notice CRP-357 which is now obsolete. A notice containing the list of approved State CPA's will be reissued.

9 CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat

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Recommending CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat

2-CRP, Exhibit 9, provides that NRCS, in consultation with State Technical Committees, may develop and recommend technical restoration specifications that will cost-effectively restore and maintain specific rare and declining habitat through enrollment in CP25.

To be effective for signup 25, State specifications for a specific CP25 practice must be approved by the FSA National Office in writing. NRCS NHQ will provide guidance to NRCS State Offices.

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10 Action

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County Office Action

County Offices shall take action according to the following table.

Step	Action
1	Provide the local NRCS Office with a copy of this notice.
2	Make preparation for CRP signup 25 a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities.
3	Ensure that CRP-2's and CRP-1's are completed with the correct signup number according to paragraph 3.
4	Display the current Soil Rental Rate Posting Report in a public area according to paragraph 5.
5	Record the WRP easement acreage data in the system according to 1-CRP and paragraph 6 by November 30, 2001.
6	Ensure that all applicable files are updated with the correct total county cropland according to this notice.
7	Ensure that the correct county cropland total is transmitted to the State Office by COB December 5, 2001.
8	Determine whether a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation will be required according to 2-CRP, Part 12 and paragraph 6.
9	Request waivers of the 25 percent cropland limitation by COB December 14, 2001 , from the FSA National Office through STC, according to this notice.

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10 Action (Continued)

B

State FSA Office Action State Offices shall take action according to the following table.

Step	Action
1	Make preparation for CRP signup 25 a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities.
2	Immediately begin reviewing C/S rates according to this notice.
3	Ensure that County Offices obtain and enter total WRP cropland acreage into the automated CRP contract system.
4	Ensure that County Offices transmit the total county cropland report according to 1-CRP and paragraph 6.
5	Submit requests for a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation for signup 25 to the FSA National Office, by COB December 14, 2001 , according to paragraph 2.
6	Ensure that all County Offices are aware there will be no State ranking plan for signup 25.

C

State NRCS Office Responsibilities State NRSC Office responsibilities are as follows.

Step	Action
1	Submit recommendations for CP25's to NRCS NHQ according to paragraph 8.
2	Inform all NRCS Field Offices that there will be no State ranking plan for signup 25.
3	Ensure that all NRCS Field Offices use the correct N2b, N2c, and N5a lookup tables for signup 25.
4	Provide a copy of the "Signup 25 WESL" list to the applicable NRCS Field Office by December 30, 2001.
5	Ensure that only FSA/NRCS nationally approved software is used.

D

Technical Assistance Vendors A pilot effort for private sector technical assistance is scheduled for FY 2002. Additional guidance will be provided shortly.

Key Completion Dates

Key dates in preparing for signup 25 are identified in this table.

Action	Completion Date
Ensure that the total county cropland information is entered according to paragraph 6.	November 30, 2001
County Offices transmit the total county cropland report.	December 5, 2001
Submit requests for 25 percent cropland waivers.	December 14, 2001
Review and update all C/S rates, if applicable, according to paragraph 2.	January 11, 2002
